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UNIVERSITY OF CANBERRA



Degree thesis submitted for: **Master of Arts in Information and Technological Sciences (Research), University of Canberra**

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Abstract

The Australian business environment has been changing at an ever-increasing pace since the mid-1980s. Technological, economic and social changes have altered the working environment. There have been constant technological advances with information technology influencing most categories of work. Organisations in public and private sectors have ongoing expectations of increased productivity, increased quality of processes and swifter responsiveness to clients. Team roles have changed. Team members are multi-skilled and work is designed to emphasise the whole task.

The Karpin Industry Task Force described a vision for an Australian business environment that would, by 2014, be one with a flexible, skilled and motivated workforce, world class managers, a customer comes first mentality, and an internationally competitive perspective. These characteristics are congruent with those of learning organisations.

The aim of this study is to evaluate the suitability of groupware as the supporting infrastructure for a learning organisation. To do this, the study assesses the use of technology to support personal and team learning in a learning organisation, studies the impact of groupware on learning within workgroups, determines the extent to which communication and learning styles influence its effectiveness, and identifies ways in which groupware can be used to capture the information used to support knowledge management in an organisation. Two case studies are used to undertake this assessment.

Three distinct yet related frameworks underpin this study. The first is that of Groupware and the related research frameworks of Computer Supported Cooperative Work (CSCW) and Computer Supported Collaborative Learning (CSCL). The second is the Learning Organisation and its supporting disciplines. The final framework is that of learning and the action-oriented learning processes. Each is examined and the interrelatedness of the frameworks is explored.

The journey to produce this written material has been one of twists and turns, blind alleys and blinding revelations, observation and reflection. My choice of techniques has been eclectic, reflecting the breadth of theoretical material covered.

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